RIVER TRAFFIC TO MARINA UP 55%

By Liam Timmins

The local River Suck has enjoyed an increase of 55% or 439 lock passages visiting the Marina in 2022, with 1229 boats being recorded in 2022 compared to 790 in 2021. The increase in visitors has positive effects on local tourism post COVID.

Within the last three years, tourism along the Shannon river has been developing. Since 2019, domestic bookings have risen by 40% and there has been a large increase in registered boats along the river, with 9,000 being reported two years ago to just over 9,500 this year. Waterways Ireland recorded over 14,000 boat journeys through the river Shannon in the six months to June of 2022, which is higher than in the same time period in 2021.

Half of the 439 passages through the lock in Poolboy would come from private cruisers, with the other half being hired cruises. A portion of these passages can be attributed to local boat owners, but the significant portion of hired cruises highlights the many tourists travelling into Ballinasloe.

"This goes to show that promoting the wonderful waterway and facilities on offer can make a huge difference in attracting more visitors and tourists. Roll on the 2023 season and looking forward to seeing you all out on the river in the year ahead" stated Graham Bartlett Chairperson of the local Branch.

Failte Ireland hopes to continue to revitalize tourism on the river during the decade to encourage people to visit the towns and ports along the waterway. The agency will focus on upgrading Ireland's old, relatively inefficient fleet and growing cruise business. Modern, larger boats have the ability to cater for groups and families. In 2018 boat rental companies sold about 4,000 "rental weeks" to more than 17,000 tourists, indicating the strength of this strategy in providing for large groups of individuals. Additionally, this strategy lent itself well to people looking for 'staycations' during the pandemic.

The River Suck Branch is the 25th and newest Branch within the IWAI network. The River Suck is ideal for anyone travelling the river for a daytrip, and the marina featured conveniently in the centre of Ballinasloe allows visitors to explore our town. This tourism will also benefit our local economy, allowing greater marketing opportunities for our town.

"Well done to IWAI River Suck branch - increase of 55% more boats with more people coming to visit and enjoy Ballinasloe and surrounding areas! Onwards and upwards in 2023!" exclaimed Senator Aisling Dolan.

For further information about IWAI River Suck Branch call 086 4097 017 or see iwairiversuckbranch facebook page.

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